



MOLLY MALONE & BRAM STOKER IN

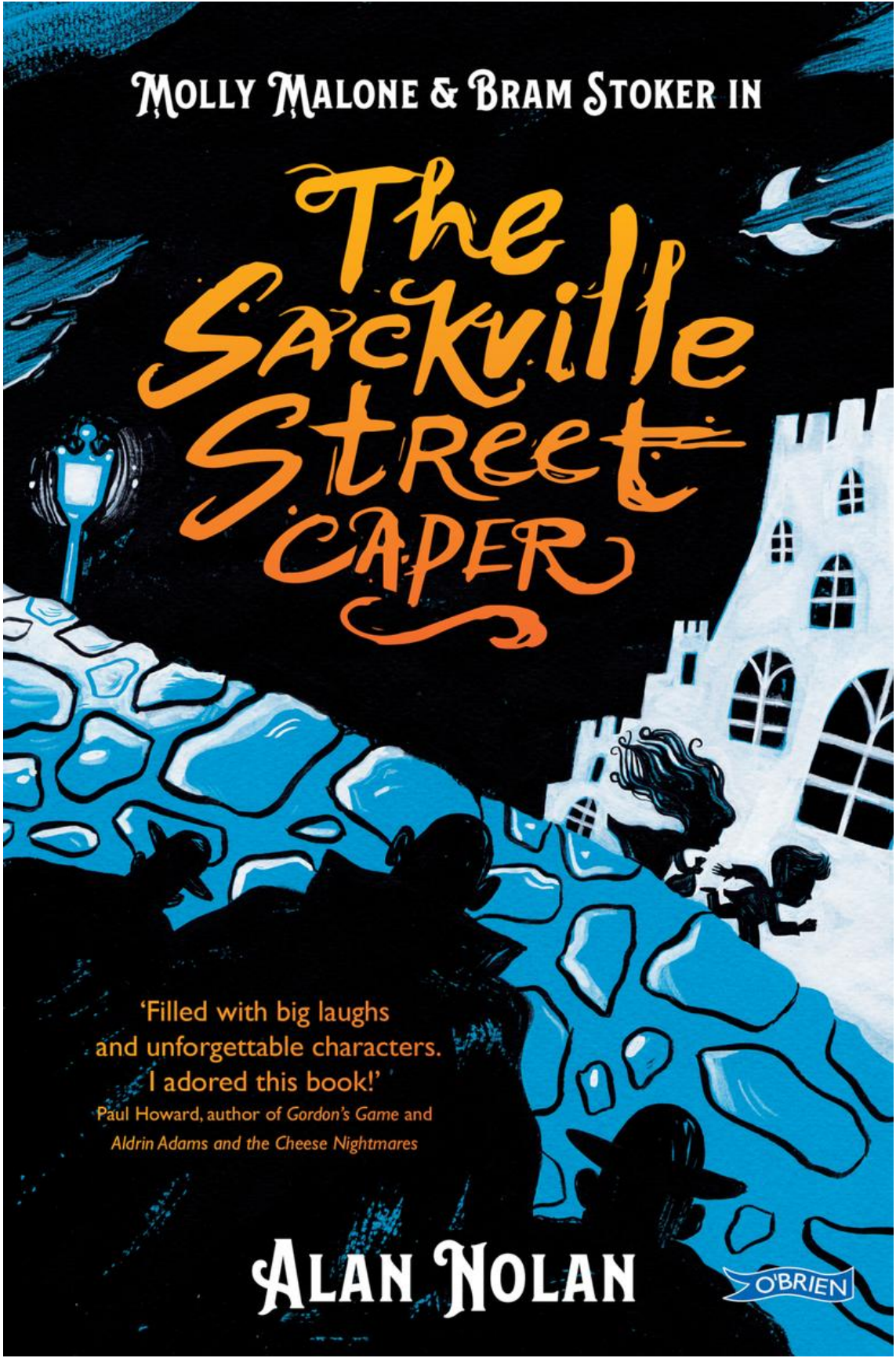
The Sackville Street CAPER

'Filled with big laughs
and unforgettable characters.
I adored this book!'

Paul Howard, author of *Gordon's Game* and
Aldrin Adams and the Cheese Nightmares

ALAN NOLAN

O'BRIEN



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The Sackville Street Caper

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ALAN NOLAN

O'BRIEN

'Victorian Dublin is alive - or should that be alive-alive-oh? Alan Nolan has worked his magic to reimagine Molly Malone and Bram Stoker as a young crimefighting duo. A gripping, edge-of-your-seat caper, filled with big laughs, unforgettable characters and more twists and turns than the River Poddle. I adored this book!'

Paul Howard, author of Gordon's Game and Aldrin Adams and the Cheese Nightmares

MOLLY MALONE & BRAM STOKER IN

The Sackville Street CAPER

ALAN NOLAN



THE O'BRIEN PRESS
DUBLIN

Dedication

For Don

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Author's Note on Dublin

The Real Bram & Molly

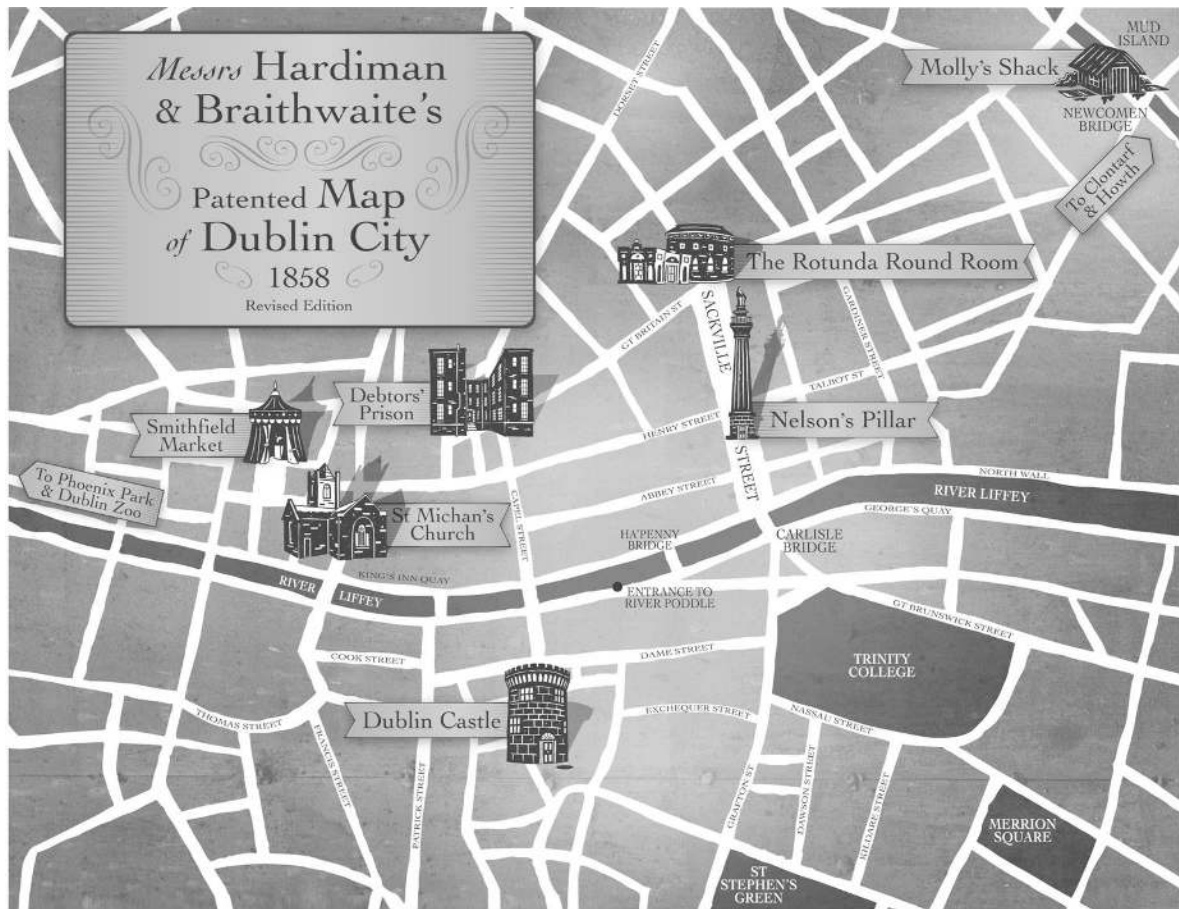
The Song

Acknowledgements

Other Books

About the Author

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**A SHORT LIST OF CHARACTERS CONTAINED WITHIN, PROVIDED
BY THE MOST CONSIDERATE AUTHOR FOR YOUR INSTRUCTION
AND DELIGHT:**

BRAM STOKER

The future author of *Dracula*, eleven years of age, yearns for adventure and to have stories to tell.

MOLLY MALONE

Eleven years of age, accomplished sneak thief and part-time fishmonger.

**SHEP, ROSE, BILLY THE PAN, CALICO TOM, AKA THE
SACKVILLE STREET SPOOKS**

Molly's gang, to whom she is part sergeant major, part mother hen.

**COUNT VLADIMIR GROF-CONSTANTIN DE LUGOSI, KNIGHT-
INDIGENT OF TRANSYLVANIA**

A down-at-heel (yet spookily Gothic) Transylvanian count, who plans to rob the Irish Crown Jewels to pay off the numerous gambling debts he has accrued across Europe.

MESSRS BOUNDERBY & CADDSWORTH

The Count's short, bumbling, slightly dim-witted sidekicks; they are almost identical in appearance, but for the fact that one of the villains has a moustache and no beard, while the other miscreant has a beard and no moustache.

MADAME FLORENCE

A fortune teller at Smithfield Market, variously known as the Seer of the What-Is-To-Come, the One Who Knows All, the Seventh Daughter of a Seventh Daughter, and the White Witch of Westmoreland Street.

WILD BERT FLORENCE

A semi-retired Wild West trick-rider from 'this side of the Mississippi', USA, and Madame Flo's husband.

ABRAHAM STOKER

Bram's strait-laced civil servant father, and Keeper of the Crown Jewels
at Dublin Castle.

Prologue

Adventure Awaits!



Bram lit the candle on his bedside table and tall, creepy shadows instantly began to dance around the dormitory walls. Outside, a harsh gust of night wind blew through the branches of a tree, causing its bony twig fingers to tap and scrape against the windowpane.

As usual, Bram was the last boy awake in the dormitory. He wasn't at all worried that the wind, or the scraping twigs, or the dim candlelight would wake up the other boys in the room as they slept, row by row, in their cots – if they could manage to sleep through Nesbitt's incessant snoring, they could sleep through anything!

He stared thoughtfully at the shadows as he chewed his pencil. *That one fluttering around the gas lamp fitting looks like a bat*, he thought, *and this one crouching beside the wardrobe looks like an evil witch about to pounce!* He smiled nervously, thinking about his plan for the next day, the plan he had mapped out in his mind for so many weeks. He opened his leather-bound diary and began to write.

The Diary of Master Abraham Stoker

22nd of August 1858
Howth, County Dublin

Well, Dearest Diary,

The decision is made; this shall be my last night in Mrs Harker's Academy, and I find that now my mind is finally set on escape, my heart is bursting with both anticipation and relief.

I should like to rise from my bed and shout for joy, to open up the window and cry HALLOOO! into the cool night air, but I fear I may wake the other boys in the dorm.

But although I shall miss everybody (even Mrs Harker), I find the Academy so *boring*! I am intent on becoming a writer, but *how* am I to be a writer if I attend an Academy where *nothing ever happens*?

So, it is time to move on. Even if only for a few days.

Next month I am to start my senior school education in the Reverend Wood's School - another famously dreary establishment - but before that, I intend to embark on AN ADVENTURE.

Tomorrow, while Mrs Harker and the boys are on the walking trip to Howth Harbour, will be the perfect time to make my escape.

I shall walk the dusty road to Sutton Cross, then through Bayside and on along the coast path. I shall hurry through Clontarf for fear Mama or, even worse, Papa should spy me on my journey. I may even flag down a passing carriage or cart - I have heard some of the boys in the dorm refer to the practice as 'cart-cadging' - and ask the driver if I may accompany him into Dublin.

For it is there in Dublin City that I shall become a writer. All the action and excitement and incidents of Ireland occur in the big city. I shall experience REAL LIFE there, I shall see stories unfold before my eyes; in short, I shall have something to write about!

But don't you worry, Dearest Diary - I shan't leave you behind.

Wheresoever I will go, you shall be by my side (or at least, in my knapsack).

So, until the morrow, D.D. - ADVENTURE awaits!

Bram

Chapter 1

School's Out!



IN WHICH YOUNG **MASTER BRAM STOKER** SLIPS AWAY FROM SCHOOL
TO PURSUE A LIFE OF ADVENTURE!

Bram placed his pencil inside the pages of his diary and, reaching down, tucked the small, leather-bound book into his knapsack and quietly shoved it under his bed beside his chamber pot.

He looked around at the other boys in the dorm, or at least, the ones he could see by the dim light of his candle. He couldn't see Nesbitt, but he knew he was there by the droning snore that bounced off the wooden panels of the room. He smiled as he remembered how Cooky had stitched a pocket into the back of Nesbitt's pyjamas, right between the shoulder blades, in an effort to stop him snoring.

'Pop a walnut into the pocket, dear,' she told him. 'That way, every time you turn on your back and start snoring, the walnut will dig into you and make you tip over onto your side again.'

This plan worked for a couple of noise-free nights, but unfortunately Cooky's scheme had two fatal flaws – one

was that Nesbitt loved to eat walnuts; the other was that Nesbitt's parents had kindly gifted him a nutcracker the previous Christmas. He went through almost a shilling's worth before Cooky admitted defeat.

Bram licked his thumb and forefinger and extinguished the candle. He closed his eyes and made an inventory in his head. Shoes. Short trousers. Underwear. An old jacket, not too fancy. Coin purse. All under the spare blanket at the end of his bed. In the morning he would help himself to some bread and cheese from the kitchen as he left. And some string. Must remember some string. You never know when you will need string. He reached down in the darkness and felt for his knapsack. Still there. Right beside the chamber pot. *Oh dear*. Maybe he was nervous about tomorrow's planned escape, but he decided he'd better use the chamber pot again.

* * *

The next morning Cooky sounded the gong at seven o'clock sharp, as she did every morning, apart from Sundays, when she sounded it at seven thirty. Nesbitt's job was to open the curtains, and he shuffled sleepily over to the window to fulfil this duty. The day was fresh and bright, and the sun was shining. *Perfect*, thought Bram.

As the boys lined up to wash at the two basins of cold water, Bram once again checked his running-away clothes and peeked under his bed to make sure his knapsack was still there.

Once washed, the boys all dressed in their school uniform of short trousers, navy blue knee socks, white wing-collared shirt, black bow tie and crested navy jacket. As soon as Bram and Nesbitt had helped some of the younger boys tie their bow ties – Bram always felt they could be frightfully fiddly for little fingers – the boys